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Canadian Diplomacy and the Korean War

La diplomatie canadienne pendant la guerre de Corée


1950-1953



Un Aperçu • A Documentary Perspective

Compilé par/Compiled by
Greg Donaghy

Section des affaires historiques,
Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international
Historical Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade



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3. The Communists have made an important concession in no longer insisting that the prisoners who do not wish to be returned home should be physically removed from Korea to a "neutral state".

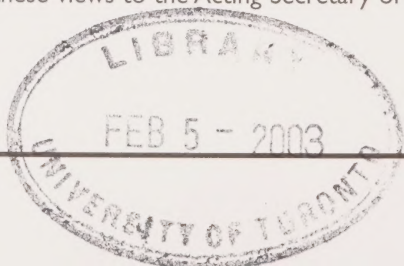
4. In view of the above, I think the way is now open for the conclusion of an armistice, if the United States administration is seriously determined to obtain one, as I believe it is. Moreover, I am not too surprised that the counter-proposal of the Communist Chinese and North Koreans does not include any mention of reference back to the United Nations, for the simple reason that neither Government is a member of that body. In my view, it may be necessary for the United Nations Command to be prepared to consider a compromise on this point in the interest of obtaining an early armistice.

5. I also believe that the main thing at present is not so much to concern ourselves with future points of method and procedure - though the Communists as we know can exploit these - as to recognize that there is already adequate agreement by both sides on the principles which should govern a solution of the prisoners-of-war question to provide a reasonable basis for an armistice. The problem of disposing of the remaining prisoners-of-war will remain a problem, no matter what methods and procedures are devised. However, once the exchange of prisoners has actually started, the problem of the "hard-core" prisoners should become more manageable and less acute than it is in the prevailing atmosphere of the present discussions. It should also be noted that there is now agreement on both sides on:

a) the setting up of a Repatriation Commission composed of neutral states; and

b) as a second resort, the reference of this problem to the political conference to be called following the armistice. This area of agreement is, in my judgement, sufficient for our immediate purposes of obtaining an armistice.

6. Please convey these views to the Acting Secretary of State [Smith].



Canadian Diplomacy and the Korean War

La diplomatie canadienne pendant la guerre de Corée

1950-1953

Like their counterparts in foreign ministries throughout the Western world, Canadian diplomats were surprised and dismayed by Communist North Korea's attack on South Korea on the morning of Sunday, June 25, 1950. At the United Nations (UN), which the Soviet Union was boycotting, the United States secured a Security Council resolution urging UN members to assist South Korea with troops and equipment. From the start, Canada reacted cautiously to American efforts to mobilize international support for South Korea's defence. Worried that the attack might be a Communist plot to distract Washington's attention from the defence of Europe and uncertain how the Canadian public might react to sending forces to Asia, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent hesitated for almost a week before finally agreeing to send three destroyers to Korea. When he announced this decision, Lester B. Pearson, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, stressed that this was not a token contribution. In response, a disappointed American spokesman quipped, "Okay, let's call it three tokens!"

Throughout July, pressure mounted

Comme leurs homologues des ministères des Affaires étrangères du monde occidental, les diplomates canadiens sont surpris et consternés d'apprendre que la Corée du Nord, d'obédience communiste, a attaqué la Corée du Sud le matin du dimanche 25 juin 1950. À l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU), boycottée par l'Union soviétique, les États-Unis obtiennent du Conseil de sécurité une résolution exhortant les membres de l'ONU à envoyer des troupes et du matériel en Corée du Sud. Le Canada réagit dès le début avec prudence à la campagne internationale de mobilisation menée par les États-Unis pour aider la Corée du Sud à se défendre. Tracassé par l'idée que l'attaque ne soit un complot communiste destiné à détourner l'attention de Washington de la question de la défense de l'Europe, et incertain de la réaction des Canadiens s'il envoyait des troupes en Asie, le premier ministre Louis Saint-Laurent hésite presque une semaine avant d'accepter finalement d'envoyer trois destroyers en Corée. En annonçant cette décision, le secrétaire d'État aux affaires extérieures Lester B. Pearson fait valoir qu'on était loin d'une contribution purement

on Ottawa for a more substantial contribution. But St. Laurent remained cautious, eventually sending Pearson and Norman Robertson, the Clerk of the Privy Council, on a secret mission to Washington to discuss the crisis. Reassured that the United States would not overlook the danger of Soviet aggression in the North Atlantic region, Cabinet finally agreed on August 7, 1950 to raise a brigade group for service in Korea.

Canadian misgivings about the American-led coalition did not disappear as the conflict continued. Pearson and his advisors worried that Washington would run rough-shod over its UN allies and turn the battle for South Korea into an anti-communist crusade that would precipitate a wider conflict. For that reason, Pearson worked hard, often with his British and Indian colleagues, to exert a restraining influence on American policy. During the early phase of the war, for instance, he urged the United States and its impetuous commander, General Douglas MacArthur, not to take the war into North Korea, fearing Chinese retaliation and the effect that widening the war might have on Asian popular opinion. He was ignored, and contemptuously dismissed in some American circles as "Swami Pearson." On October 30, UN

symbolique. Ce à quoi un porte-parole américain déçu rétorque : « Bon! Disons alors qu'elle est un peu plus que symbolique. »

Pendant tout le mois de juillet, les pressions ne cessent de s'intensifier auprès du gouvernement canadien pour qu'il contribue de façon plus substantielle. Mais Saint-Laurent demeure prudent. Il finit néanmoins par envoyer Pearson et Norman Robertson, greffier du Conseil privé, en mission secrète à Washington pour discuter de la crise. Rassuré quant au fait que les États-Unis ne sous-estimeront pas le danger d'une agression soviétique dans la région de l'Atlantique Nord, le Cabinet accepte finalement, le 7 août 1950, d'envoyer un groupe de brigade en Corée.

Les appréhensions que le Canada nourrit à l'égard de la coalition dirigée par les Américains ne disparaissent pas, même pendant le conflit. Pearson et ses conseillers craignent que Washington ne fasse fi de ses alliés à l'ONU et ne transforme la bataille pour la Corée du Sud en une croisade anti-communiste susceptible d'étendre le conflit. Pearson s'emploie donc, souvent avec ses collègues britanniques et indiens, à exercer une influence modératrice sur la politique américaine. Au début de la guerre, par exemple, il conjure les États-Unis et leur

forces drove into North Korea where they were met by over 300,000 Chinese troops and sent reeling backwards in defeat.

Pearson, after consulting St. Laurent, now turned his attention to seeking a cease-fire, as rumours that the US might resort to atomic weapons swirled about wildly. He also opposed American plans to have the General Assembly condemn China as an aggressor as likely to make the search for peace in Asia that much harder. When his peacemaking efforts finally failed in January 1951, Pearson sadly decided to support the American declaration, though he considered it "unwise and premature." He did so in order to avoid an open breach with the United States and to safeguard Canada's standing in Washington.

With the denunciation of China as an aggressor, the Korean War settled into a long and costly war of attrition in which there was little room for Canada's middle power diplomacy. This changed in July 1951, when the Soviet Union helped broker cease-fire negotiations between US-led UN forces and Chinese military authorities. Canadian diplomats played little role in the early discussions. But when talks deadlocked in the summer of 1952 over the fate of prisoners-of-war (POW), Pearson joined India's UN

impétueux commandant, le général Douglas MacArthur, de ne pas porter la guerre en Corée du Nord, des représailles de la part de la Chine étant à craindre, tout comme l'effet que l'élargissement du conflit risque d'avoir sur l'opinion populaire en Asie. On se refuse à l'écouter et on le surnomme avec mépris, dans certains milieux américains, « pandit Pearson ». Le 30 octobre, les forces de l'ONU pénètrent en Corée du Nord où plus de 300 000 soldats chinois les attendent... et les mettent en déroute.

Après avoir consulté Saint-Laurent, Pearson s'attache alors à obtenir un cessez-le-feu, le bruit fou se répandant partout que les États-Unis pourraient recourir à l'arme atomique. Il s'oppose aussi au projet des Américains d'obtenir que l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies condamne la Chine pour agression, ce qui aurait rendu d'autant plus ardue la recherche de la paix en Asie. Ses efforts de paix ayant échoué en janvier 1951, Pearson se résigne à appuyer la déclaration des États-Unis, qu'il juge cependant « imprudente et prématurée ». Il le fait pour éviter une querelle ouverte avec ce pays et pour préserver la position du Canada à Washington.

Après la condamnation de la Chine pour agression, le conflit coréen tourne en une longue et coûteuse

representative, Krishna Menon, in an effort to get the 7th UN General Assembly to resolve the deadlock. After several dramatic clashes with US Secretary of State Dean Acheson, the Indo-Canadian proposals for ending the war won American but not Chinese support. However, in the spring of 1953, Peking adopted most of the UN's position as its own, and talks on an armistice moved steadily forward. On July 27, 1953 military commanders at Panmunjom signed the armistice, and an uneasy peace, which endures to this day, settled over the Korean peninsula.

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guerre d'usure, qui ne laisse guère de place à la diplomatie d'une puissance moyenne comme le Canada. La situation change en juillet 1951, quand l'Union soviétique se pose comme intermédiaire dans la négociation d'un cessez-le-feu entre les forces de l'ONU, dirigées par les États-Unis, et les autorités militaires chinoises. Les diplomates canadiens ne jouent pas un grand rôle au début des discussions, mais quand les pourparlers achoppent à l'été 1952 sur la question des prisonniers de guerre, Pearson s'associe au représentant de l'Inde à l'ONU, Krishna Menon, pour obtenir que la septième Assemblée générale des Nations Unies intervienne. Après plusieurs accrochages dramatiques avec le secrétaire d'État américain Dean Acheson, les propositions indo-canadiennes visant à mettre fin à la guerre recueillent l'appui des Américains, mais non celui des Chinois. Au printemps 1953 toutefois, Pékin se range pour l'essentiel à la position de l'ONU, et les pourparlers d'armistice vont alors bon train. Le 27 juillet 1953, les commandants militaires signent l'armistice à Panmunjom. Une paix difficile, qui l'est encore, s'installe dans la péninsule de Corée.

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The four documents published below illustrate significant aspects of Canada's diplomatic experience during the Korean War. The first is a memorandum from Pearson to Prime Minister St. Laurent which offers a behind-the-scenes look at Canada's cautious response to the outbreak of war in June and July 1950. The second, drafted by Pearson himself, was presented to the US government in December 1950 when many observers feared that Washington might unilaterally resort to atomic weapons to stem the flow of Chinese Communist troops into Korea. The third document is a short telegram capturing the Canadian reaction to early reports that the Soviet Union was promoting cease-fire talks in Korea in June 1951. The final document, a telegram to Washington, outlines Ottawa's views on Peking's declaration that it was ready to renew armistice negotiations on the basis of the Indo-Canadian resolution adopted by the UN in the fall of 1952.

The four documents are reprinted in their language of origin. Editorial interventions are indicated with square brackets.

Further information on Canadian diplomacy during the Korean War can be found in these publications of the Historical Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade:

Les quatre documents ci-après illustrent des moments importants de la diplomatie canadienne pendant la guerre de Corée. Le premier document est une note de Pearson à l'intention du premier ministre Saint-Laurent. Elle explique, vues de l'intérieur, les raisons ayant motivé la réaction prudente du Canada au début de la guerre, en juin et juillet 1950. Le deuxième document, rédigé par Pearson lui-même, a été remis au gouvernement américain en décembre 1950, au moment où de nombreux observateurs craignaient que Washington n'emploie unilatéralement l'arme atomique pour stopper l'entrée massive des troupes communistes chinoises en Corée. Le troisième document est un court télégramme qui rapporte la réaction du Canada à des nouvelles qui avaient circulé auparavant, à savoir que l'Union soviétique préconisait des discussions de cessez-le-feu en Corée, en juin 1951. Le quatrième et dernier document, un télégramme adressé à Washington, expose les réactions du Canada à une déclaration du gouvernement chinois, qui se disait prêt à reprendre les négociations en vue d'un armistice en se fondant sur la résolution indo-canadienne adoptée par l'ONU à l'automne 1952.

Les documents sont reproduits dans la langue où ils ont été rédigés.

- *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (Canadian Government Publishing, Public Works and Government Services Canada)

- *Canada's Department of External Affairs, Vol. 2, Coming of Age, 1946-68*, by John Hilliker and Donald Barry (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995)

- *Canada and the Early Cold War, 1943-1957*, edited by Greg Donaghy (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1998)

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Les notes du rédacteur sont placées entre crochets.

Pour en savoir davantage sur la diplomatie canadienne pendant la guerre de Corée, consultez les publications suivantes de la Section des affaires historiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international :

- *Documents relatifs aux relations extérieures du Canada* (Éditions du gouvernement du Canada, Trauvaux Publiques et Service gouvernementaux Canada).

- *Le Ministère des Affaires extérieures du Canada, Vol. 2, L'essor, 1946-1968*, John Hilliker et Donald Barry (Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995).

- *Le Canada au début de la guerre froide, 1943-1957*, sous la direction de Greg Donaghy (ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Commerce international, 1998).

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List of Persons

Chiang Kai-shek, Generalissimo
President of the Republic of China

Churchill, Winston
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom,
1940-45, 1951-55

Claxton, Brooke
Minister of National Defence

Diefenbaker, John George
Progressive Conservative MP
(Lake Centre)

Drew, George
Progressive Conservative MP
(Carleton) and Leader of the Opposition

Franks, Sir Oliver
British Ambassador to the US

Green, Howard
Progressive Conservative MP
(Vancouver Quadra)

Heeney, Arnold
Under-Secretary of State for External
Affairs

Holmes, John W.
Acting Canadian Permanent Delegate
to the United Nations

Liste des personnages

Tchang Kaï-Chek, généralissime
Président de la République de Chine

Churchill, Winston
Premier ministre du Royaume-Uni,
1940-1945, 1951-1955

Claxton, Brooke
Ministre de la Défense nationale

Diefenbaker, John George
Député progressiste-conservateur
(Lake Centre)

Drew, George
Député progressiste-conservateur
(Carleton) et chef de l'Opposition

Franks, Oliver (Sir)
Ambassadeur du Royaume-Uni aux
États-Unis

Green, Howard
Député progressiste-conservateur
(Vancouver Quadra)

Heeney, Arnold
Sous-secrétaire d'État aux Affaires
extérieures

Holmes, John W.
Délégué permanent par intérim
auprès des Nations Unies

Howe, C.D.
Minster of Trade and Commerce

Kennan, George
Director of Policy Planning,
US Department of State

King, William Lyon Mackenzie
Prime Minister of Canada, 1935-48

Knowles, Stanley
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation
MP (Winnipeg North)

Lie, Trygve
UN Secretary-General

Low, Solon,
MP (Peace River) and Leader of the
Social Credit Party

Malik, Y.A.
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of
the Soviet Union

Morrison, Herbert
Foreign Secretary of the
United Kingdom

Pearson, Lester B.
Secretary of State for External Affairs

Howe, C.D.
Ministre du Commerce

Kennan, George
Directeur de la planification des poli-
tiques, Département d'État américain

King, William Lyon Mackenzie
Premier ministre du Canada,
1935-1948

Knowles, Stanley
Député de la Fédération du Common-
wealth coopératif (Winnipeg Nord)

Lie, Trygve
Secrétaire général des Nations Unies

Low, Solon
Député (Peace River) et chef du parti
du Crédit social

Malik, Y.A.
Sous-ministre des Affaires étrangères
de l'Union soviétique

Morrison, Herbert
Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires
étrangères du Royaume-Uni

Pearson, Lester B.
Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires
extérieures

Pouliot, Jean-François
Liberal M.P. (Témiscouata)

Rhee, Syngman
President of South Korea

Roosevelt, Franklin D.
President of the United States, 1933-45

St. Laurent, Louis
Prime Minister of Canada

Smith, Walter Bedell
Director of the US Central Intelligence
Agency

Truman, Harry S.
President of the United States

Woodward, Stanley
US Ambassador to Canada

Wrong, Hume
Canadian Ambassador to the US

Pouliot, Jean-François
Député libéral (Témiscouata)

Rhee, Syngman
Président de la Corée du Sud

Roosevelt, Franklin D.
Président des États-Unis, 1933-1945

Saint-Laurent, Louis
Premier ministre du Canada

Smith, Walter Bedell
Directeur de la Central Intelligence
Agency des États-Unis

Truman, Harry S.
Président des États-Unis

Woodward, Stanley
Ambassadeur des États-Unis au Canada

Wrong, Hume
Ambassadeur du Canada aux États-Unis

I.

Note du secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures pour le premier ministre

Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister

Top Secret

Ottawa, June 27 and July 4, 1950

Korea

The United States Ambassador [Woodward] called to see me this morning at 9:30. Mr. Heeney was present. He showed me a telegram which he had received from his government with the text of a statement on the Korean war, which the President [Truman] proposed to issue this morning at 12:00 noon. He told me that he would be sending a copy of this text shortly. I made no comment on it at the time as I wished to have a copy of the text for examination before making any observations.

At 10:45, Mr. Wrong telephoned from Washington to say that he had been asked by the State Department to meet with the other Ambassadors of the North Atlantic countries to discuss the above text, which apparently had been read to him over the telephone. Sir Oliver Franks had already expressed to the Americans the anxiety of his government over the contents of the President's statement. I told Mr. Wrong that I did not have a copy of the text before me, but that having read it earlier, I shared this anxiety, and I added that I was awaiting a copy from the U.S. Embassy, and that I would phone him, Mr. Wrong, when I received it.

A few minutes later, with the text before me, I talked with Mr. Wrong again and pointed out to him my doubts about both the form and substance of the text. I thought that the reference to "Communist imperialism" was unnecessary, while the statement that the U.S. Air and Sea Forces would give cover and support to the forces of the Republic of Korea would, in fact, involve, if carried out, intervention in this war. At the

moment I was not so much concerned with the wisdom or unwisdom of such intervention as about the way in which it might be brought about. Surely if the United States wished to intervene in this way, it should be done after the matter had been discussed at the Security Council and appropriate action had been taken there through a resolution, which would bring such intervention within the terms of the Charter. As the Security Council was meeting this very afternoon, no delay would be involved in the United States bringing the matter before it. What the President was proposing was action which might mean U.S. intervention, but which would not be collective action as a result of any collective decision. This would mean that the U.S. would take the action and would expect other countries later to support and sanction it. I felt that this was the wrong way to proceed, even though I realized that the time element was so important. I wondered also whether the President in the use of the above words regarding air support realized the full implications of what he was saying.

I also questioned with Mr. Wrong the wording of the paragraph which dealt with Formosa. What, in fact, was proposed was that Formosa should become a U.S. protectorate, even though the U.S. would continue to recognize the Chiang Kai-shek occupation regime as the Government of China. This seemed all the more anomalous, in view of the fact that the text of the President's statement ordered the Chinese Government in Formosa to cease all sea and air operations against the Chinese mainland, adding that the Seventh Fleet would see that this order was carried out.

I emphasized to Mr. Wrong that while I personally was unhappy about this statement of the President, nevertheless, it was the responsibility of the U.S. Government. However, if other countries were being invited to associate themselves with it, even through such a meeting as the one which he was about to attend, then we certainly had the right to bring our doubts to the notice of the U.S. Government.

Later, Mr. Wrong phoned to say that he had passed on the substance of my observations, which were in accordance with his own views, to George Kennan, who was impressed by them and thought that the text should be modified accordingly, and possibly not issued until later in the day.

I saw you about this matter at 11:30 and as agreed had a preliminary and informal word with Mr. Drew about the developments outlined above. I told Mr. Drew that after we had heard from Mr. Wrong again you might wish to consult with him and the other Leaders. Mr. Drew expressed satisfaction at my message and my preliminary observations, and said that he would be glad to discuss the matter further with you in the afternoon, if developments made that desirable.

In the afternoon of Tuesday, you saw Mr. Drew, Mr. Knowles, representing the C[oooperative] C[ommonwealth] F[ederation], and Mr. Solon Low, and brought them up-to-date on Korean developments. I was also present.

On Wednesday I made a statement in the House associating the Government with the Security Council resolution which had been passed the previous afternoon by a majority of 7 to 1 (later increased to 8, as India acceded). This statement received the support of the official opposition, the CCF and later, the Social Credit party.

The developments on Thursday were as follows. Cabinet discussed the situation at its 2 o'clock meeting and decided nothing need be said at that time regarding participation in the carrying out of the Security Council resolution. In the afternoon, during the debate on the External Affairs estimates, I was pressed by the opposition to state what we were doing, and replied in general terms that we would do our full duty, but only as a member of the United Nations in concert with other members. I also emphasized that, as the situation was very fluid, it was impossible to say what contribution, if any, Canada could make to United Nations collective action; that we would have to consider the matter in the light of developments. Mr. Drew did not quarrel with this attitude; in fact he supported it. Likewise Mr. Knowles and Mr. Solon Low approved of it, though Mr. Diefenbaker and Mr. Green seemed impatient that we were not able to announce in concrete terms what we were going to do. It was during this discussion that Mr. Pouliot made a somewhat ambiguous statement, the general effect of which was, however, that we should do nothing.

On Thursday evening, Mr. Howe, Mr. Claxton and I met you in your office at 11:30 p.m. when we discussed the whole matter. Mr. Claxton,

Mr. Howe and I felt, as you will remember, that we should indicate that we were prepared to assist in terms of light naval forces, if the United Nations required such assistance. You felt strongly, and we agreed with you, that such assistance, if given, should only be in response to a request from the United Nations and in support of an operation authorized and sponsored by the United Nations.

On Friday morning at 10.00 o'clock we met again in your office when I produced a draft of the statement which, with amendments, was given by you in the House of Commons. This statement emphasized that our obligations were only those of a member of the United Nations, but pointed out that we were ordering certain destroyers into the Pacific so that we would be in a better position to fulfil those obligations, if developments made that desirable, in terms of naval support to United Nations activities in Korean waters. This statement received general support, and even Mr. Pouliot had nothing to say against it.

At 2 o'clock that afternoon the Security Council met and your statement was read as an indication of Canada's acceptance of the resolution of Tuesday.

Since Friday we have been very active, through Mr. Wrong in Washington and Mr. Holmes in Lake Success, in working out with the British and the Americans a formula which would make it clear that the operations being conducted in Korea are under the authority of the United Nations, exercised through a commander appointed by the United Nations. Discussions have also been going on as to the appointment of some United Nations Commission which would be the channel of communication from the commander to the United Nations in respect of policy questions and offers of assistance in this matter. This has been a difficult and complicated business. Constitutionally, the United States Government cannot put its forces under United Nations command, except as a result of military agreements concluded under Article 43. No such agreements, as you know, have been made, and in any event it would be difficult to invoke Article 43 without bringing the Russians in. We are getting over this difficulty by a resolution of the Security Council which would make it clear that, while military control and direction would have to remain

under the United States commander on the spot, the acceptance by other United Nations participating of a unified command and the association of any forces given by those nations with that command, would be as a result of a United Nations decision.

We have made it abundantly clear in Washington that if Canada is to help, it must be help to the United Nations, fulfilling our obligations under the Charter, and not help to the United States; also that the United Nations character of the whole operation must be emphasized and formalized. There is no disposition to quarrel with this in Washington or in London or, indeed, in any other quarter that we have explored.

The great danger, as I see it, is not so much that the Russians may use the Korean situation to provoke a general war (I do not think they will do this), but that either United Nations intervention will be ineffective in South Korea or (and this is more likely) it will result in a situation not unlike that which persisted in Spain during the civil war, with two Korean forces facing each other, backed by the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. respectively. The U.S.S.R. may assist the North Koreans to the point where they cannot be decisively defeated in the field, and the U.S.A. may do the same for the South Koreans. This may result in a prolonged indecisive conflict which would be a drain on United States resources. The U.S.S.R. would have every reason to be happy if the United States became heavily, but indecisively, engaged in Korea, while the French were deeply involved in Indo-China and the British pre-occupied with Malaya.

There is, of course, another danger that I have not mentioned above, namely, that United States action may prove decisive, and that public opinion in that country will then insist that United Nations forces move beyond the 38th parallel and clean up the whole of the Korean situation. In that case, there may be an unhappy conflict between United States policy and United Nations policy. The latter is pledged merely to defeat an aggression and not, as I understand it, to change the political situation in Korea. Of course, some such change is bound to take place, as a result of developments of the last week. I do not see how there can be a return to the status quo. Either the communists make good their claim to all of Korea, or the United Nations will have to do something to strengthen the

position of democratic forces under a better government than that of Syngman Rhee. One reason why we should be careful in not going too far in insisting on the United Nations character of the operation is that when the war is over, the United States may wish to continue United Nations responsibility for the control and government of Korea, in a way which we may not be able to support.

The whole picture, as is clear from even this short analysis, is explosive and dangerous, and it is too early to draw conclusions one way or the other about the eventual political or military result.

2.

**Note du secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures au
secrétaire d'État des États-Unis**

**Memorandum from Secretary of State for External Affairs to
Secretary of State of the United States**

Secret

December 6, 1950

**Views of the Canadian Government on Possible Use
of Atomic Weapons in the Far East**

The military authorities may argue that the atomic bomb is just another weapon. But, in the minds of ordinary people everywhere in the world, it is far more than that and has acquired an immensely greater intrinsic significance. The anxiety with which the possibility of the use of the bomb, by either side, is regarded has been strikingly and increasingly evident of late among our friends in Europe and in Asia. This is the main reason for the appeal, even in free countries, of the cynical Communist "peace" campaign.

The psychological and political consequences of the employment of the bomb, or the threat of its employment, in the present critical situation would be incalculably great. The risk of retaliation, to which our allies in Europe feel themselves to be exposed, would affect materially their will to resist, and even the consideration of the possibility of atomic war in Asia, when our defences are still weak, cannot fail to stimulate the tendencies toward "neutralism" which the development of strength and unity on our side is beginning to overcome.

The strategic use of the bomb against Chinese cities might conceivably change the course of military events in Asia now, but at the risk of destroying the cohesion and unity of purpose of the Atlantic community. Certainly its use, for a second time, against an Asian people would dangerously weaken the links that remain between the Western world and the peoples of the East.

The atomic bomb is the most powerful deterrent element in the arsenal

of the free world. To what extent this is because of actual military potential, to what extent to psychological factors, it is impossible for us, and probably for anyone, to know. In any event, it is universally regarded as the ultimate weapon. It should be treated as such. The effectiveness of the bomb as a tactical weapon cannot be fully appreciated. The very uncertainty of its capabilities in the tactical role must add materially to its deterrent value. Once it has been used tactically, however, much of its force as a deterrent may disappear, unless its use for this purpose has proven overwhelmingly successful.

The Canadian people would hold their Government responsible for making the Canadian views known to the United States before the atomic bomb were to be used. This is especially true in present circumstances because of the United Nations character of the operations in Korea.

Furthermore, in atomic matters, the Canadian Government had, from the beginning, been a partner in the tripartite co-operation which stemmed from the Quebec Agreement between President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill in 1943. Mr. Mackenzie King was associated with the joint declaration of November, 1945, by the heads of three governments directly concerned. Through its membership in the Combined Policy Committee, the Canadian Government has continued to assist in the development of our joint resources of raw materials and of scientific knowledge. Canada has made a direct contribution to building up the atomic stockpile. Although the *modus vivendi* of the Combined Policy Committee concluded in January, 1948, does not include, as did the Quebec Agreement, the clause providing for prior consultation, the Canadian Government would be inevitably involved, and in a specially close sense, in the consequences of the use of the atomic bomb.

The mass intervention of the Chinese Communists in Korea may lead to the Third World War. In the present critical military situation, those who have their own men engaged (and this applies, of course, particularly to the United States) are obviously entitled to have full consideration given to the use of every available means of supporting the ground forces fighting under the United Nations command. This is natural and inevitable. But, before a decision of such immense and awful consequence, for all of us, is taken, there should be consultation among the governments principally concerned.

3.

**Le haut-commissaire au Royaume-Uni au secrétaire d'État
aux Affaires extérieures**

**High Commission in United Kingdom to Secretary of State for
External Affairs**

Telegram 1565

Secret. Immediate.

London, June 26, 1951

Following for the Prime Minister from Pearson. Begins: Yesterday I met the Deputies of the North Atlantic Council and made to them a short statement which is being sent by airmail. It was very general in character, but seems to have been pretty well received.

2. In the morning I had a press conference as the journalists here, especially the Canadians, had been clamouring for some statement. The first question was on Malik's broadcast, and I expressed the view that while there were a great many ambiguities in the Soviet statement, and though we had had unhappy experiences in the past with certain Russian statements on issues of this kind, nevertheless it would be a great mistake not to follow up Mr. Malik's proposals, so that we could at least find out what they meant. I added that if they contained a satisfactory basis for ending the Korean war, on terms which the United Nations could accept, then we should make the most of it. I referred to the "cease-fire" proposals of last December as constituting, at that time, such a satisfactory basis, and suggested that they should be re-examined.

3. I received by telegram last night your own comments on this matter in the House of Commons, which have also been reported in the press here.

4. Lie, who is flying back from Norway to New York, has sent a message to London that he is anxious to see me here between planes. I am conferring with Mr. Morrison at 3:30 this afternoon, and will then go out to the airport to see Mr. Lie. I shall cable you if there is anything to report after that talk. Ends.

4.

**Le secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures à l'ambassadeur
aux États-Unis**

**Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in
United States**

Telegram EX-827

Secret. Immediate

Ottawa, May 12, 1953

Korean Armistice Negotiations

Following from the Minister.

I believe the 8-point proposal advanced by the Communist side goes a long way to meet the objections to their previous proposals which have been put forward by the United Nations Command. Indeed, I think there is only one difference of substance between the new Communist proposal and the Indian resolution adopted by the Assembly last December. Both proposals provide for a reference of the problem of the prisoners of war who do not wish to return home to the political conference to be called under paragraph 60 of the Draft Armistice Agreement. However, the Communist proposal does not provide for further reference of this problem back to the United Nations, if the political conference is unable to settle it.

2. This, in my judgement, is the only significant difference between the two proposals. I am not too disturbed by the idea of Czechoslovakia and Poland providing guard troops in Korea, although the detailed arrangements for this will need working out. I understand the United States is prepared to accept these two countries in the proposed Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission. Indeed, it would be difficult to adopt any other position as both countries have already been agreed to as members of similar bodies, under the terms of both the Draft Armistice Agreement and the General Assembly's resolution of December 1952.

3. The Communists have made an important concession in no longer insisting that the prisoners who do not wish to be returned home should be physically removed from Korea to a "neutral state".

4. In view of the above, I think the way is now open for the conclusion of an armistice, if the United States administration is seriously determined to obtain one, as I believe it is. Moreover, I am not too surprised that the counter-proposal of the Communist Chinese and North Koreans does not include any mention of reference back to the United Nations, for the simple reason that neither Government is a member of that body. In my view, it may be necessary for the United Nations Command to be prepared to consider a compromise on this point in the interest of obtaining an early armistice.

5. I also believe that the main thing at present is not so much to concern ourselves with future points of method and procedure - though the Communists as we know can exploit these - as to recognize that there is already adequate agreement by both sides on the principles which should govern a solution of the prisoners-of war question to provide a reasonable basis for an armistice. The problem of disposing of the remaining prisoners-of-war will remain a problem, no matter what methods and procedures are devised. However, once the exchange of prisoners has actually started, the problem of the "hard-core" prisoners should become more manageable and less acute than it is in the prevailing atmosphere of the present discussions. It should also be noted that there is now agreement on both sides on:

a) the setting up of a Repatriation Commission composed of neutral states; and

b) as a second resort, the reference of this problem to the political conference to be called following the armistice. This area of agreement is, in my judgement, sufficient for our immediate purposes of obtaining an armistice.

6. Please convey these views to the Acting Secretary of State [Smith].

Canadian Diplomacy and the Korean War

La diplomatie canadienne pendant la guerre de Corée

1950-1953

Like their counterparts in foreign ministries throughout the Western world, Canadian diplomats were surprised and dismayed by Communist North Korea's attack on South Korea on the morning of Sunday, June 25, 1950. At the United Nations (UN), which the Soviet Union was boycotting, the United States secured a Security Council resolution urging UN members to assist South Korea with troops and equipment. From the start, Canada reacted cautiously to American efforts to mobilize international support for South Korea's defence. Worried that the attack might be a Communist plot to distract Washington's attention from the defence of Europe and uncertain how the Canadian public might react to sending forces to Asia, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent hesitated for almost a week before finally agreeing to send three destroyers to Korea. When he announced this decision, Lester B. Pearson, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, stressed that this was not a token contribution. In response, a disappointed American spokesman quipped, "Okay, let's call it three tokens!"

Throughout July, pressure mounted

Comme leurs homologues des ministères des Affaires étrangères du monde occidental, les diplomates canadiens sont surpris et consternés d'apprendre que la Corée du Nord, d'obédience communiste, a attaqué la Corée du Sud le matin du dimanche 25 juin 1950. À l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU), boycottée par l'Union soviétique, les États-Unis obtiennent du Conseil de sécurité une résolution exhortant les membres de l'ONU à envoyer des troupes et du matériel en Corée du Sud. Le Canada réagit dès le début avec prudence à la campagne internationale de mobilisation menée par les États-Unis pour aider la Corée du Sud à se défendre. Tracassé par l'idée que l'attaque ne soit un complot communiste destiné à détourner l'attention de Washington de la question de la défense de l'Europe, et incertain de la réaction des Canadiens s'il envoyait des troupes en Asie, le premier ministre Louis Saint-Laurent hésite presque une semaine avant d'accepter finalement d'envoyer trois destroyers en Corée. En annonçant cette décision, le secrétaire d'État aux affaires extérieures Lester B. Pearson fait valoir qu'on était loin d'une contribution purement

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Canada



Ministère des Affaires étrangères
et du Commerce international

Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade
